RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

The Government Railway Bill is more intelligible than such documents generally are. The chief provisions are, that companies wishing for an extension of time must make application to the Commissioners of Railways within two months from the passing of the Act. The commissioners may then, if they think fit, extend the time, but not for more than two years from the expiration of the period allowed by the original Act. The claims of parties aggrieved by the delay, if not settled by agreement with the company, shall be settled by arbitration or a jury, as by the Lands Clauses Consolidation Act. It is also enacted that no railway company which had not before November 27th, 1847, entered into any contract for the execution of works authorised by their Act, shall now enter into any contract within twelve months after the passing of the present Act, except in cases of deviation from the line originally proposed, and contracts for the construction of works which the company are authorised to proceed with by the consent of three-fourths of the whole number of shares, such consent to be signified in writing within six weeks after the passing of the Act. Contracts entered into in contravention of the Act shall be void and of no effect.——The Chancellor of the Exchequer, during the debates on the passing of this Act, and while deprecating the too rapid conversion of floating capital into fixed capital, as the chief cause of the mercantile and manufacturing distress,—a cause foreseen by Mr. Porter, at the end of 1845,—adduced several figures to show the rapid increase in the amounts annually devoted to expenditure on the construction of railways. From 1826 to 1835, Parliament authorised the raising of about 19,000,000*l.*; in 1836 and 1837, 36,000,000*l.* Distress then checked railway speculation. In 1844 and 1845, Parliament authorised the raising of 74,000,000*l.* In 1846, 800 plans for railways were submitted to the Railway Board, and Parliament authorised 132,000,000*l.* The total expenditure authorised between 1826 and 1846 was 286,000,000*l.*; by far the greater portion being sanctioned in the last three years. The Railway Commissioners state the actual expenditure to have been,—In 1841, 1,470,000*l.*; in 1842, 1843, and 1844, gradually increased to 6,105,000*l.*; in 1845, about 14,000,000*l.*; In 1846, upwards of 30,000,000*l.*; and in the first half of 1847 alone 25,770,000*l.* "If the works had gone on at the same rate," added Sir Charles, "the expenditure would have amounted in this year to 64,000,000*l.*; in 1848, to 70,000,000*l.*; in 1849, to 47,000,000*l.*; and in 1850, to 10,000,000*l.*; by which time, probably, the works already authorised would have been finished.——A number of particulars are adduced by *Herapath*, from which it appears that the receipts per mile on various lines in the present year are 'about the same—possibly on the whole a little less' than last year. The Midland have increased in every respect. The Great Western are about the same, but when the reduction in fares to the same standard as the London and North-Western comes into operation, and their parallel lines commence working, they may possibly be less, he thinks, to some extent;—possibly they may, but probably they may not. It must be recollected, in estimating the receipts per mile, on various lines, that there have been long branch lines opened, which, while they receive less per mile, have cost less in construction; so that a reduction of receipts per mile must not be taken to indicate a proportionate reduction of profit.—— A Mr. A. C. Pirani intends, it is said, to bring forward an invention for lighting railway and other carriages with gas, to be conveyed through glass pipes so contrived that they can be removed at pleasure. A cheerful and brilliant substitute for the glimmering light now in use in railway carriages, and one at one-third the cost, too, would certainly be a boon next perhaps to comfortable warmth, in the winter season, and might be made indeed to aid in also warming the carriages which it lights,—a hint which, we hope, the inventor will adopt and benefit by, as well as benefit the travelling public, who much require the suggestion of some such economical mode of killing two birds with one stone to be pertinaciously thrust by inventors on the callous notice of railway directors, who have hitherto been as cold to every melting appeal, even from the frozen lips of their favourite first-class traffic, as John Frost himself.——The latter gentleman, by the way, has already begun his winter's work as a contractor on the atmospheric lines, to which he still seems regularly to supply the place of pitch or other solder to the valves,—but rather too officiously. The question, as lately observed in the *Mining Journal*,—itself an advocate of the general principle of the atmospheric system,—is still a question of valve. Could not some modification or other of the plan for opening and sealing the valve by heated iron and pitch, as the train passes along, be applied to the frost or ice itself, so as to turn John's willing services to useful account?—— Meantime the elastic steel tube system, a working model of which was lately laid down near the Poplar station of the Blackwall Railway, is still endeavouring to make way in the place of that whose practical continuance each successive winter seems to defy. The working-model alluded to, however, at length altogether disappeared; but the *Mining Journal* assures its readers that "the tubes were taken up not from any mistrust or fear of the capability of the system, but from a determination, on the part of the proprietors and patentees, regardless of expense, to render the tube as perfect as possible, and to develop the full capabilities of the system;" and, indeed, the tubes have been relaid, after being a little further advanced towards the perfect state by the addition of new corrugated copper joints, introduced by the patentees, Messrs. Clarke and Varley, in order to "allow for any degree of expansion and contraction, and supersede the employment of every description of leather, gutta percha, or other perishable or objectionable substance." Satisfactory experiments are said to have been since tried with the new apparatus. We have not lately heard any more about Messrs. Cunningham and Carter's ingenious scheme for getting rid of the slit valve altogether, and for turning on the atmospheric or pneumatic power or vacuum through a copper main with branches. Many are still hopeful that the atmospheric system, "when carried out with well-constructed mechanism, is the only means of escape from the enormous expenses and the imminent danger of the present general system, and, in fact, which are inherent in it."——The Lambeth vestry had a meeting lately in order to adopt measures which should put a stop to the erection of a bridge, by the South-Western Company, over Church-street, right in the centre of the carriage way of which the pier would stand, dividing the road into two parts. In proposing the first resolution, Mr. Hicks adverted to the fact of the road being one of the finest in the parish, and of its being included in the Government scheme of metropolitan improvements as the approach to the contemplated bridge over the Thames. The carriage way was originally 38 feet wide, but it was now divided by a pier, on one side of which the carriage way was 16 feet, and on the other 18 feet 5 inches. By the Act of the company they were compelled to cross the road with an arch 60 feet span; and by the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act every turnpike road crossed was to be crossed at a span of not less than 35 feet. This was a turnpike road at the time of the passing of the Act. It would be very easy to cross the road by a single span arch, supported on pillars, leaving smaller arches for the footways, as at Bermondsey-street. For the board of surveyors it was stated, that they had given no definite consent to the plan, which, however, appeared to them to be the best proposed. When they spoke of crossing the road at a single span, Mr. Locke, the engineer to the company, said that he would not answer for the safety of passengers travelling over such an arch, especially after the experience they had lately had in reference to iron bridges. The company had built the piers of the bridge, and had all the cast-iron frames ready.—It was at length determined to try the effect of pacific measures at first, and a committee was appointed to act accordingly.

A Lucky Discovery.—Among a collection of paintings, the property of Mr. John Wilson, of Stratford, he has discovered "A Sleeping Venus," executed by Titian. We understand the fortunate owner has sold it within the last few days for five hundred guineas.—*Chelmsford Chronicle.*

SLATES.

The best slates, Professor Ansted said in one of the lectures to which we have already referred, were those which were most crystalline, and which, when breathed upon, gave out the faintest argillaceous odour. When this odour was given out strongly, then the slates would readily decompose, and, consequently, these were not so well fitted for economic purposes. In many instances, the appearance of slate at the surface indicated that it had undergone a change, apparently produced by violence, as it had become broken, and in that form it was very readily decomposable, and, of course, very bad; yet, on digging down to the deeper beds, a good material would very often be found. The colour of the slate was not of much importance; it was generally either blue or green, and very excellent slates were common to both colours. The extent to which slate was quarried was considerable, though it was in the hands of a very few individual proprietors, or small companies. It might be thence supposed, that a larger quantity would be obtained, and the price consequently reduced, if there were more competition; but a little consideration would show, that competition would be any thing but easy. For instance, a landed proprietor might have on his estate a slate of the very best quality; but if it were only nine or ten miles from the sea, with no very easy means of conveyance, it might be a losing speculation to quarry it, because the most material part of the cost was the carriage, and the quarries already established possessed every advantage of that kind. Thus, in estimating the value of property of this nature, it was highly important to remember what were the means of conveyance. Another consideration arose out of the large per centage of loss in the present mode of getting slate. This was of no consequence, in one sense, as the material was enormously abundant, but it became of vital importance when there were no means of disposing of the rubbish. The large quarries at Penrhyn were worked in successive terraces, and the slate being obtained in immense masses, by blasting, the waste was enormous, but it was got rid of without much inconvenience. The Balahulish quarries, in the north of Scotland, were also very extensive, between 5,000,000 and 7,000,000 roofing slates being there quarried annually. The weight of this number would probably be about 10,000 tons, and the quantity of rubbish being generally five or six times as much as the slates, 50,000 or 60,000 tons of refuse would thus have to be disposed of. In this case, however, it was thrown directly into the sea; and the quarry, in that respect, possessed an advantage which made it far more valuable than better beds lying further inland. Property of this kind was exceedingly valuable; the quarries at Penrhyn, for instance, had been variously estimated at from 30,000*l.* to 40,000*l.* a year.

NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

The new church at Staplefield-common, Sussex, consecrated on Saturday week, is in the early English style. It consists of a nave, the only part for the congregation, with seats for about 350 persons, mostly free. The building cost about 2,000*l.*, principally subscriptions. ——The erection of a new chancel at Newchurch Church has been sanctioned, by the Bishop of Winchester, with a liberal donation. ——The public baths at Colchester, designed by Mr. Penrice, architect, are nearly completed.——Braintree Church appears to be going to wreck for want of repairs, the rates or rents due to the church out of parish property being withheld, in many cases, by the tenants or holders of the property.——It is intended to erect a church at Prickwillow, parish of Ely Trinity. The dissenters have already erected three chapels there,—one Baptist, one Wesleyan, and the other Primitive Methodist.——The church for the new district of St. Mark's, Wolverhampton, tenders for the erection of which were advertised in last week's Builder, is to accommodate about 1,200 persons, and to consist of chancel, 25 ft. + 20 ft.; nave, 84 ft. +27 ft.; north and south aisles, 84 ft. + 16 ft. 6 in.; height to wall plate, 31 ft.; to ridge piece, 52 ft.; tower and spire, 154 ft. high, with vestry and

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